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ABSTRACT

The report details results in the fifth year of implementation (1997-97) of a set of French, German, and Italian instructional modules designed for non-foreign-language-majors at the University of Dublin (Ireland). Focus is on the chief developments during that year (further refinement of the curriculum, production of a guide to independent language learning, and introduction of an identity cards to monitor access to language learning facilities and resources), rates of course enrollment and completion, and the generally high level of achievement in the courses. Research and development activities are outlined, changes in language program personnel are noted, and the piloting of a European Language Portfolio that records the student's language qualifications, background, and work is explained. Prospects for the language program's further development in the future are also discussed. (MSE)

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ED 429 446

University of Dublin ◆ Trinity College

Report on the fifth year of the ESF-funded project to consolidate and develop foreign language modules for students of other disciplines and the third year of the Language Modules Research and Development Project

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Centre for Language and Communication Studies

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1 October 1997–30 September 1998

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University of Dublin ◆ Trinity College

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1 Introduction

David Little

1.1 Objectives, organization and funding

1997–8 was the fifth year in which the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS) offered French, German and Italian modules to students who were not studying a foreign language as part of their degree course.

The objectives of the modules are: (i) to develop students' communication skills for purposes of study, travel or work experience abroad during their undergraduate years; and (ii) to enhance their academic qualifications, vocational prospects, and potential for future mobility. Students can take language modules for one or two years; each year of study is complete in itself. Although students in Science and Arts (Letters) who successfully complete their language module have bonus marks added to their annual examination result, the modules are offered to students on an extracurricular basis.

The language modules were introduced in 1993–4 thanks to a special grant of £100,000 from the Higher Education Authority, which wished to give the learning of foreign languages a more central role in the undergraduate curriculum. The HEA again made special grants available to fund the modules in 1994–5 (£58,000), 1995–6 (£52,000), 1996–7 (£56,000), and 1997–8 (£56,000). In all four years, however, the grants were confirmed only several months after CLCS had committed itself to providing the modules.

In 1994–5 CLCS created a partial buffer against this uncertainty by securing funding to support a three-year Language Modules Research and Development Project, launched in Michaelmas term 1995. The biggest single contribution to this project was a private gift of £105,000 (£30,000 in 1997–8). In addition CLCS raised £10,742 in grants, sponsorship and consultancy earnings in 1997–8. (A summary of income and expenditure is given in Appendix 2.)

1.2 The language modules in 1997–8

A full account of the language modules in 1997–8, including external examiners' reports, is provided in section 2. Here it is enough to draw attention to the year's chief developments, summarize rates of participation/completion, and note the generally high level of proficiency achieved by students in their end-of-year assessment.

Principal developments in 1997–8 were:

- further refinement of the course programme;
- the production of a guide to self-access language learning;
- the introduction of CLCS identity cards as a means of monitoring access to CLCS facilities and resources.

At the beginning of Michaelmas term 1997, 238 students enrolled for Year 1 modules, compared with 255 in 1995. 98 students completed their module – fewer than in 1995–6 (104), though a marginally higher percentage of the final total recruitment (40% compared with 39%).

At the beginning of Michaelmas term 1996, 79 students enrolled for Year 2 modules, compared with 66 in 1996–7. Of these, 63 completed their module, compared with 51 in 1996–7 (80% of the final total recruitment, compared with 70%).

In the end-of-year assessment, the average mark in all but two of the modules was in the II.1 range. This high level of achievement is confirmed by the external examiners' reports (see 2.6 below).

1.3 Research and development in 1997–8

Section 3 gives a full account of research-and-development activity in 1997–8. The principal achievements were:

- the publication by the Centre for Information on Language Teaching, London, of the book *Institution-Wide Language Programmes: a Research-and-Development Approach to their Design, Implementation and Evaluation*, by David Little and Ema Ushioda;
- an empirical evaluation of tandem language learning via e-mail, in collaboration with the Ruhr-Universität Bochum;
- further progress in the development of language learning technologies;
- the development of a dedicated Web environment for tandem language learning via e-mail.

The research team (David Little, Ema Ushioda, Marie Christine Appel, John Moran, Breffni O'Rourke, Klaus Schwienhorst, and Barbara Simpson) were responsible for 12 project-related publications and 10 conference papers and workshops, many of which will yield publications in due course.

1997–8 was the third and final funding year of the Language Modules Research and Development Project. It is worth noting that in three years the project has yielded a total of 32 publications and 43 conference papers and workshops. This is the chief reason why the language modules have attracted so much attention internationally.

1.4 Changes in personnel

Dr Ema Ushioda was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the language modules programme from its inception in Michaelmas term 1993 to the end of September 1998. Her unfailing efficiency has provided a firm base for development, and she has made a notable contribution to the project's research output. It is appropriate to record here CLCS's gratitude for all her efforts. In 1998–9 the language modules will be coordinated by Barbara Simpson.

In Trinity term 1998 our external examiners for French and German came to the end of their three-year term. Dr Esch and Prof. Dr Legenhausen have given us invaluable support and advice, and again it is appropriate to record CLCS's gratitude. For the period 1998–2001, the external examiner for the French modules will be Dr Vanessa Davies, director of the language centre in the Foreign Office, London, and the external examiner for the German modules will be Prof. Dr Dieter Wolff of the University of Wuppertal.

1.5 European Language Portfolio

In April 1997 the Council of Europe launched its European Language Portfolio, which is currently being piloted in a number of states. The Portfolio comprises

- a passport recording formal language qualifications in an internationally transparent manner;
- a language biography describing language knowledge and language learning experiences;
- a dossier of the language learner's work.

Its purpose is pedagogical as well as informational, since it is intended that regular work on the Portfolio will give learners insight into the language learning process and their own developing linguistic identity.

CLCS is the first university department to be invited to pilot the European Language Portfolio, which will be integral to the language modules programme in 1998–9. We shall also use the Portfolio with refugees learning English for vocational purposes, and propose to conduct a comparative evaluation towards the end of 1999.

1.6 Future prospects

There can be no doubt that in the five years since their introduction, the language modules that are the concern of this report have

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established themselves as an important part of College life. During this time 1,594 students have enrolled for a language module, and 644 (40%) have been successful in the end-of-year assessment.

As noted in 1.1 above, the HEA first provided funding for the language modules because it wished to see foreign language learning assume a more central role in the undergraduate curriculum. Consequently, the question of how exactly the modules should be related to or integrated with the rest of the curriculum has been with us from the beginning. No doubt it will be discussed by the working party on curricular reform that the University Council decided to establish in Trinity term 1998.

Meanwhile, a trend seems to be emerging for new degree courses to include a fully integrated foreign language module:

- 1997–8 saw the introduction of a course in Information and Communications Technology, which includes two-year modules in French and German. In the first year of the course 63 students opted for the French module (59/94% were successful in the junior freshman examination), and 19 students opted for the German module (18/95% were successful in the junior freshman examination).
- 1998–9 sees the introduction of a degree course in Business Studies and Chinese, in which CLCS has responsibility for the Chinese language component.
- Currently two other departments are exploring the possibility of including foreign language modules in proposals they are formulating for new degree courses.

As I have pointed out in earlier reports, it is misleading to see the language modules in isolation from the other language teaching and learning that goes on in College:

- The modern language departments have benefited from the improvements in CLCS's language learning facilities and resources brought about especially by the Language Modules Research and Development Project.
- In 1998–9 members of the language modules research team will again be collaborating with colleagues in some modern language departments in the provision of self-access language learning resources and activities tailored to the needs of students in those departments.
- The guide to self-access language learning that has been compiled in the first instance for the benefit of students taking the language modules is freely available to all users of CLCS's language learning facilities and resources.

To date the language modules have been funded on a year-to-year basis. Since 1995–6 the fragility of this arrangement has been somewhat concealed by the existence of the Language Modules Research and Development Project. However, we have now received the last instalment of the generous gift that made that project possible. Sufficient funds remain to carry the present programme of research and development through to the end of the academic year 1998–9, and CLCS is already seeking new sources of research funding to ensure that the language modules maintain their exemplary status.

As regards the recurrent cost of delivering the programme, it is unclear how long the HEA will continue to make special annual grants. At the same time it is difficult to imagine College being able to abandon the scheme at this stage. After five years CLCS has surely done enough to justify the appointment of core language modules staff on long-term contracts: an academic staff member with responsibility for co-ordinating and further developing the scheme; a full-time secretary; and a full-time administrator of our computer-based systems. In 1998–9 we shall be teaching foreign languages to more than 500 students. It is not reasonable to expect us to maintain this level of activity, far less extend it, entirely on the basis of year-to-year staffing.

2 Language modules in 1997–8

Ema Ushioda

2.1 Modules offered

The modules offered in 1997–8 were as follows:

Monday evening
- German for beginners in Arts and Science, Year 1
- German for beginners in Engineering, Year 1
- Italian for beginners in Arts and Science, Year 1
- German for beginners in Arts, Science and Engineering, Year 2

Tuesday evening
- French for non-beginners in Arts, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Engineering, Year 1
- French for non-beginners in Arts, Science and Health Sciences, Year 2
- German for non-beginners in Arts, Science and Engineering, Year 2

Wednesday evening
- French for non-beginners in Science, Year 1
- French for non-beginners in Health Sciences, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Arts, Year 1
- German for non-beginners in Science, Year 1

In addition, students who had completed the first year of the Italian for beginners module in 1996–7 were offered the opportunity to continue their language study on a self-access basis with teacher support on Monday evenings. Although two students initially enrolled, this self-access module came to an end early in Michaelmas term when competing evening commitments in drama studies for one student led to her withdrawal and the other followed suit.

2.2 Recruitment and rates of participation

The recruitment of students followed the same procedure as in 1996–7. Publicity and application forms were included in the mailing sent to incoming junior freshmen by the Admissions Office, while separate mailings were made to rising senior freshmen in Engineering and to students who had completed Year 1 modules in 1996–7.

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 summarize the rates of participation during the 23 weeks of the modules (expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled for each module).

The pattern of decline in the levels of participation through Michaelmas term was quite similar to that in 1996–7. Rates of completion were fractionally higher in the case of Year 1 modules: 40% of students enrolled completed the modules, compared with 39% in 1996–7. In the case of Year 2 modules, rates of completion were markedly higher: 80% of students enrolled completed the modules, compared with 70% in 1996–7. Overall, the high levels of completion reflect the continuing success of these extracurricular language modules. 161 students completed the modules in 1997–8 (49% of the recruitment total). This shows a further increase compared with 1996–7, when 155 students or 45% of the recruitment total completed the modules; and it shows a substantial increase compared with 1994–5 (the end of the first two-year cycle of modules), when completion figures were 101 students or 40% of the recruitment total.

Module	Initial confirmed enrolment	Number attending first session	Final total recruitment	Number completing module
Year 1 modules				
German beginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	12 Arts 10 Science	22 (100%)	22	5 (23%)
German beginners in Engineering (Monday)	13 Eng.	13 (100%)	13	5 (38%)
Italian beginners in Arts & Science (Monday)	10 Arts 10 Science	18 (90%)	20	11 (55%)
French non-beginners in Arts (Tuesday)	34 Arts	34 (100%)	36	14 (39%)
German non-beginners in Engineering (Tuesday)	28 Eng.	27 (96%)	30	9 (30%)
French non-beginners in Science (Wednesday)	33 Science	30 (91%)	34	17 (50%)
French non-beginners in Health Sciences (Wednesday)	22 Health Sc.	21 (95%)	24	7 (29%)
German non-beginners in Arts (Wednesday)	32 Arts	30 (94%)	33	10 (30%)
German non-beginners in Science (Wednesday)	34 Science	34 (100%)	36	20 (56%)
Year 1 total	**238 students**	**229 (96%)**	**248**	**98 (40%)**
Year 2 modules				
German beginners in Arts, Science & Engineering (Monday)	3 Arts 5 Science 4 Eng.	8 (67%)	12	10 (83%)
French non-beginners in Arts, Science & Health Sc. (Tuesday)	16 Arts 10 Science 3 Health Sc.	23 (79%)	29	23 (79%)
German non-beginners in Arts, Science & Engineering (Tuesday)	10 Arts 16 Science 12 Eng.	29 (76%)	38	30 (79%)
Year 2 total	**79 students**	**60 (76%)**	**79**	**63 (80%)**
Total	**317 students**	**289 (91%)**	**327**	**161 (49%)**

Table 2.1
Rates of participation

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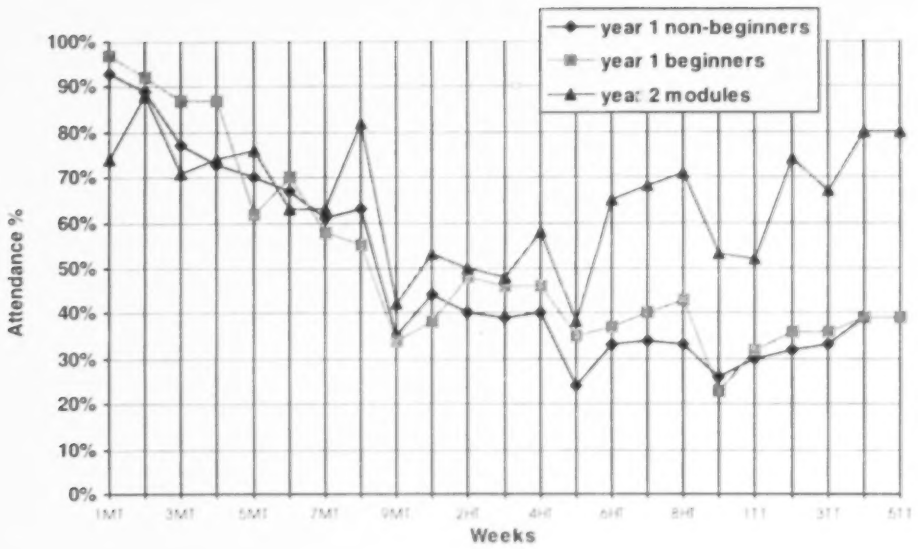

Figure 2.1
Total student participation

2.3 Design of the modules

The attendance statistics in 1997–8 encourage further confidence in the project cycle structure of the modules as an effective framework for inducing high levels of student commitment. As explained more fully in the report for 1996–7, the design of the modules was reshaped around successive cycles of group-based project work. Each four-week project cycle involves students in collaborative research and preparation over a three-week period, culminating in a class presentation in the fourth week. The project cycle structure thus ensures regular commitment and participation on the part of students working towards a common target.

The project-based approach has the particular advantage that it enables groups of students to focus on subject matter of their own choice, including areas of academic or vocational concern. Diversification of this kind became a particular feature of project work in the Year 2 non-beginner modules, which bring together students from different faculties and academic disciplines. Projects included, for example, the presentation of short instructional seminars on topics from students' fields of study, and the production of specialist newsletters for prospective overseas students interested in particular academic disciplines. A different kind of project that yielded great interest and creativity among students was the development of French and German Web-pages focusing on aspects of Irish culture and perspectives on life at Trinity.

One innovation introduced in the 1997–8 modules was the requirement that students should submit a dossier of preparatory materials in relation to each project. The learner dossier might consist of workplans, notes, annotated printouts of Internet resources, e-mail exchanges with tandem partners, and so on. In practice, the quality and range of the preparatory materials submitted varied greatly from learner to learner. While many dossiers suggested evidence of effective organization of learning and appropriate learner reflection, others seemed to lack a clear focus or purpose. For 1998–9, the learner dossier will be defined in rather different

terms as part of the European Language Portfolio scheme (see 1.5 above).

2.4 Design of assessment procedures

As in previous years, two types of assessment were administered in the final two weeks of the modules in Trinity lecture term: (i) a pencil-and-paper test comprising a 100-word dictation and a battery of 4 C-tests, designed to measure students' general underlying control of the target language system; and (ii) a communicative test to assess their ability to deploy their language skills interactively. The communicative test comprised the students' presentation of their final project.

Following discussions with teachers in 1996–7, a modification was made to the rating-scales for assessing oral presentations in 1997–8. In addition to the individual skill categories of phonology, fluency and grammatical control, a fourth category reflecting students' range and use of appropriate vocabulary was included (see Appendix 1 for modified rating-scales with full band descriptors). Assessors working independently were deployed in pairs for the piloting of the modified instrument. Statistical analyses of inter-rater reliability indicated a generally good level of agreement among assessors using the modified rating-scales. The correlation coefficients yielded ranged from 0.82 to 0.92, justifying confidence in the reliability of the modified instrument. Comments from teachers who had previously worked with the original version of the instrument were also positive, indicating that the addition of a fourth category did not detract from the overall user-friendly design of the rating-grid.

The dictation and C-test batteries were the same as those administered in the previous year. As before, the C-test batteries were also administered at the very beginning of the year to students taking the non-beginner modules in order to provide a baseline measure of language proficiency. Among students who took the C-test battery twice, an appreciable measure of progress was observable in the increase in average scores at the end of the year: for students of French, the average score rose from 62% in Michaelmas term to 70% in Trinity term; for students of German, the average score rose from 57% to 66%.

One alteration to the assessment procedures planned for 1998–9 is the introduction of continuous assessment of students' project work during the year. Until now, students' communicative test grade has been based on their performance in the final project in Trinity term. From next year, it is intended that all projects during the year will contribute to this final grade on an equal basis. The main motivation for this change is the desire to acknowledge the significant amount and quality of work that most students seem willing to put into all their projects. Such commitment is all the more commendable in view of the fact that these modules remain entirely extracurricular and students receive no compensation in terms of a reduced workload in their main degree subjects.

2.5 Assessment results

161 students completed the assessment process, 98 students in the Year 1 modules, and 63 students in the Year 2 modules. The results are summarized in Table 2.2 below, which shows the range of student performance classified by module and by Faculty. Figure 2.2 allows a comparison between Year 1 and Year 2 modules.

69% of Year 1 students achieved a II.1 grade, while 16% achieved a II.2 grade. 71% of Year 2 students achieved a II.1 grade, while 22% achieved a II.2 grade. 10% of Year 1 students and 8% of Year 2 students achieved a I grade.

As in previous years, a high proportion of students achieved upper grades. This lends further support to the view that patterns of attrition/completion in the modules reflect a process of self-selection, whereby it is the more successful and proficient students who tend to complete the modules. Once again, statistical evidence to substantiate this speculation was obtained, though this time in the case of students taking German for non-beginners (in 1996–7, such evidence was obtained for students taking French for non-beginners). Comparing students who completed the German modules with those who dropped out

Module	Student nos.	Average mark	Highest mark	Lowest mark
Year 1 modules				
French for non-beginners in Arts	14	60%	77%	48%
French for non-beginners in Science	17	64%	82%	55%
French for non-beginners in Health Sc.	7	63%	67%	52%
German for non-beginners in Arts	10	67%	78%	54%
German for non-beginners in Science	20	66%	75%	51%
German for non-beginners in Engineering	9	68%	82%	61%
German for beginners in Arts	1	–	68%	–
German for beginners in Science	4	67%	75%	59%
German for beginners in Engineering	5	63%	67%	58%
Italian for beginners in Arts	7	55%	66%	44%
Italian for beginners in Science	4	59%	64%	49%
Year 2 modules				
French for non-beginners in Arts	12	63%	75%	50%
French for non-beginners in Science	8	62%	65%	56%
French for non-beginners in Health Sc.	3	65%	73%	58%
German for non-beginners in Arts	8	69%	82%	66%
German for non-beginners in Science	13	60%	63%	56%
German for non-beginners in Engineering	9	62%	69%	55%
German for beginners in Arts	2	–	67%	64%
German for beginners in Science	5	64%	69%	58%
German for beginners in Engineering	3	64%	66%	61%

Table 2.2
Assessment results

during the course of the year, an analysis was made of relative performance levels in the C-tests administered in the first week of the modules. The mean C-test score for students who went on to complete the modules was 57%, and 52% for students who subsequently withdrew. A *z*-test was applied to test the significance of the difference between the two means, and yielded a z value of 2.67 (significant at $p \geq 0.01$), thus supporting the notion that students who completed the modules derived from a population with a higher average proficiency level. A similar pattern was reflected in the comparison of mean C-test scores between students who completed the French modules and those who did not (62% and 58% respectively), although a statistically significant result was not obtained.

2.6 Reports of external examiners

French

Dr Edith Esch
Language Centre, University of Cambridge

General remarks – Trinity College must again be congratulated on its programme of foreign language modules. The standards achieved by students are generally high, and the obvious enthusiasm with which most groups performed their end-of-year presentations shows that the formula offered by CLCS is well suited to students who are not reading for specialist language degrees. These students

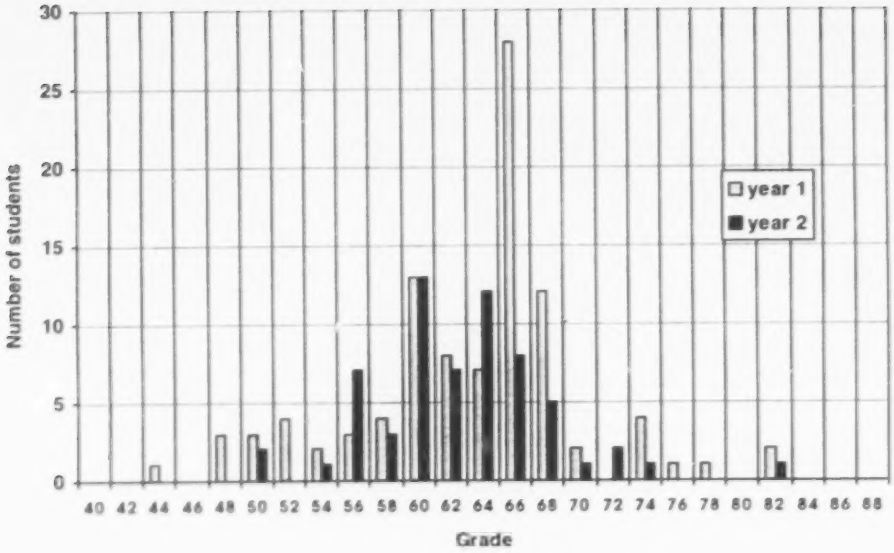

Figure 2.2
Assessment results

have very little time to devote to maintaining their foreign language proficiency and/or learning new languages, but they are very much aware of the educational advantages and career opportunities languages will give them.

Once again the modules examinations were conducted with a high degree of administrative skill and professionalism. The issue of task specification that I commented on last year had clearly been thought through carefully and the idea of project work further developed.

Information received and conduct of the examination – Information was sent well in advance of the examination. The documentation received was very clear and jargon-free. Although I was familiar with the general framework of the modules, the assessment procedures and the use of the rating sheets, clear reminders and instructions were dispatched in good time. I was also given ample opportunity to talk to the coordinator on arrival before the orals actually took place. All the minor clarifications I asked for were immediately and competently provided, leaving me in no doubt that the whole operation is firmly under control. Such professionalism is to be commended.

At my request, a set of the students' newsletters was sent to me after the examinations to complement the information gathered during the oral presentations. This was particularly useful in view of the project work proposed this year.

Oral presentations attended – I observed student presentations on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 April: six groups (23 students) drawn from Humanities, Law and Science and five groups (22 students) drawn from Science. All groups presented a newsletter.

Evaluation of the newsletter project – This year's project had been designed with a view to avoiding the problems that arose with last year's newspaper project, where it was felt that too many students had not fully grasped the communicative nature of the task or had not progressed enough to make this apparent. The idea of this year's project was to make the writing task immediately relevant to the students. The purpose of the project was to compile a newsletter designed to attract overseas students to study at Trinity College. This is a good scheme because it brings home the idea that what is said or written is for a particular audience and for a particular aim. As I pointed out last year, project work has the advantage of making students work collaboratively.

Assessment of the group performances – All the groups I observed had worked on the same

project. In contrast with last year, the topic had clearly made students think carefully about the issues associated with their disciplines, and some were really excellent. Also, it was evident that students had thought about the kind of arguments which would make their contemporaries from other countries come to Trinity College rather than to some other English-speaking university in Europe or the United States. The main weaknesses occurred when groups had not collaborated closely enough and/or the newsletter had been written without a proper editorial policy in mind – reflected, for example, in the absence of a title for one publication. Nonetheless, the overall general quality of the newsletters was much higher than that of the newspapers last year, and it was clear that the students had put a huge amount of effort into getting their pieces into a coherent whole. There was also a notable effort on the visual side. On the whole, it is clear that the recommendation made last year that effective communication should take precedence had been met more than satisfactorily.

Pronunciation – Last year pronunciation was singled out as an area which required immediate attention. I am pleased to report that definite progress had been made, but it is important to keep reminding teachers and students alike of the importance of intelligibility for efficient communication. There were still too many errors that were obviously the result of written forms interfering with pronunciation.

Use of the Web and of technology generally – I am pleased to report that the overuse of information from the Web was no longer a problem: downloaded information was relevant and carefully used. The only further improvement one can recommend here is that the use of spelling checkers should be systematically recommended.

Conclusion – The changes in the overall design made last year have been consolidated and improved upon and the weaknesses which I noted last year in the specification of the communicative task have been successfully overcome. Generally, the French group projects are a very successful means of evaluating the progress of students working in teams, largely because they permit both group and individual assessment and because of their inherent flexibility.

Remarks on the debriefing meeting held on Wednesday 29 April 1998 – As we had come to the end of our term as external examiners, Prof. Dr Legenhausen and I attended a meeting with CLCS staff responsible for the language modules. The following points were made:

The French and German modules appear to be a good response to the current institutional need to provide language learning opportunities for students of other disciplines. The next step in the development of the modules is not altogether clear because it involves the difficult issue of integration. Faculties often oppose the integration of language modules because they see them as undermining the concept of a core discipline. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider the kind of profile we want our graduates to have intellectually, culturally and educationally in the context of Europe. The problem – and the advantage – with optional courses is that they are self-selective. The majority of students who take them are those whose motivation will carry them through to the end of the course. If Trinity College supports this kind of programme, funding remains the chief issue. Uncertainty of funding means that it is difficult to maintain a corps of trained staff with regular contracts and to monitor quality as one would wish to. It is also difficult to ensure quality control with different European students involved every year. It was agreed that the difficulties associated with staffing and with the training of teachers and monitors were difficult to tackle at one level because they were associated with fundamental policy issues, but that the 'module' formula with project work and group work for the assessment, developed over the past five years, served its purpose extremely well. The modules open opportunities to Trinity College students by offering them a chance to develop transferable skills and to take advantage of language learning to reflect on the quality of their own learning experience.

German

Prof. Dr. L. Legenhausen
University of Münster

Introductory remarks – The following report not only refers to the examinations in April 1998, but – being the last by the present external examiner – also summarizes the main

features of the course design and its implementation.

My report is based on

- attendance at oral presentations by Year 1 non-beginners on 29 April and by Year 2 non-beginners on 28 April 1998;
- a complete set of written project reports from Year 1 and Year 2 non-beginners;
- a detailed discussion with the CLCS staff involved in running the French and German modules.

The students' performance and their written reports – The framework within which the non-beginners had to design their projects and presentations was more narrowly and precisely defined than in previous years. Course participants were to produce a student newsletter targeted at prospective overseas students (Year 1 non-beginners focused on life at Trinity College, Year 2 non-beginners on their main academic subject). This more restricted approach had some obvious advantages over earlier less focused task frameworks:

- All the texts were addressed to the same clearly defined audience, so that the remote readers' needs and interests could be taken into consideration.
- The topics ensured that all the students had a similar amount of 'inside knowledge'. The text products and presentations thus became more easily comparable, which allowed for more objective assessments of the project outcomes.
- The fact that students were working on the same topics introduced a competitive element – also encouraged by the course specifications – which certainly improved the quality of the performance.

Many texts were so highly informative that a follow-up project should seriously be considered in which – for example – the various reports on campus life could be edited by advanced learners and made available to German students coming to Trinity College. If this was organizationally possible, the whole project work – and especially the writing activity – would become even more purposeful and authentic. Such a follow-up project would have the additional advantage that learner texts would then be reintegrated into the course modules and could thus serve as learning materials for language awareness activities.

As always, the oral presentations were lively and carried by the students' enthusiasm and commitment. The vocabulary they used in their semi-prepared presentations was quite varied, and it can be said that the linguistic standard of the presentations was generally high. The only problem with some of the students, which was also noted in previous years in non-beginner classes, is the high degree of mother tongue interference at the phonological level. Since in these cases the overall comprehensibility is affected, one might consider the integration of more systematic pronunciation activities or introduce awareness raising phases during regular course work. They could even be extended to grammatical and other linguistic problem areas. However, the danger that language-focused activities might have a negative effect on students' motivation should not be underestimated, and they should perhaps be introduced only on an experimental basis. Devising attractive awareness-raising activities seems to be one of today's pedagogical challenges and would probably require some additional staff training.

Course design and assessment procedures – As in previous years, I would like to stress that the foreign language modules are admirably designed, and it is especially features such as the ones listed below which make them exemplary:

- The fact that the course modules are project-based ensures that real-life interactions are generated. When carried out in the target language, they are apt to develop the learners' interlanguage most efficiently.
- The students are given a large amount of freedom to design their own projects (within the necessary constraints of the modules curriculum), which furthers their autonomy and supports their motivation.
- The assessment procedures grow naturally out of the regular course work and thus guarantee maximum content validity.
- The assessment procedures in the oral presentations can relate to (semi-)prepared texts as well as to impromptu speech. In this way a compromise is reached between the students' need for security and the test requirement for spontaneous reactions.
- There is a well-designed balance between oral and written language in course work as well as in assessment procedures,

covering a wide range of communicative skills.

- Group work and individual work are also suitably combined, allowing group dynamics to develop and at the same time allowing for the possibility of assessing individual responsibilities.
- This year's course also saw the integration of the main academic subject into the project work (Year 2 non-beginners), as suggested in earlier reports.
- Probably the most remarkable new course feature is the requirement that students submit a dossier of preparatory materials for the projects. This is an excellent addition to the overall course design since product-oriented assessments can thus be complemented by an evaluation of the on-going process as documented in the dossier.

Concluding remarks – A course design with the above-mentioned features is most likely to sustain the motivation of students and at the same time guarantee maximal linguistic benefits. Steps have already been taken to introduce similar modules at the University of Münster, using the CLCS design as a model. I am repeating myself when I state that the CLCS foreign language modules have set a standard for practical language courses which leaves little room for further improvement.

3 The Language Modules Research and Development Project in 1997–8

David Little

3.1 Self-access resources

(Barbara Lazenby Simpson)

In 1996–7 we identified weaknesses in the way students approached self-access study and began to provide information leaflets focussed on different media and learning objectives. In Michaelmas term 1997 these leaflets were expanded into a booklet entitled *Guide to Self-Access Study*. The booklet was given to all students who enrolled for a language module and was also made available to students in the modern language departments. In addition, an advisory service was again provided for modules students. This helped individuals or small groups of students to identify appropriate learning pathways in order to meet their particular language learning objectives.

At the request of the departments concerned, this service was extended to junior freshmen in the Departments of Italian and Germanic Studies, for whom we also provided information sessions about self-access language learning as a supplement to classroom learning. Some twenty students from these two departments regularly came to discuss language learning problems throughout the academic year.

On the basis of experience gained in the International E-Mail Tandem Network, an e-mail tandem project was organized for junior freshmen in the Department of Italian, who were paired with students in two institutions in Italy.

New materials were acquired to support self-access language learning, mostly CD-ROMs, which are rich in authentic texts and are a particularly valuable resource for modules students when they are preparing projects and presentations. Some pedagogical material was also purchased both on CD-ROM and as computer software.

3.2 Tandem language learning via e-mail

(David Little, Ema Ushioda, Marie Christine Appel, John Moran, Breffni O'Rourke and Klaus Schwienhorst)

For the past three years CLCS has been a member of the International E-mail Tandem Network, co-ordinated by the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. As part of the network's two-year EU-funded Open and Distance Learning project "Telematics for Autonomous and Intercultural Tandem Learning" (1996–8), CLCS undertook an empirical evaluation of tandem language learning via e-mail and MOOs (object-oriented multiple-user domains). For this purpose, a bilateral tandem exchange scheme was set up in which students taking CLCS's German modules were paired with students in Bochum taking a course in English for International Communication. Both courses emphasize the development and use of communication skills, focus on similar topic areas, and are built around cycles of project work. In both institutions, moreover, the courses are taken as extracurricular options by students who are not studying a foreign language for their degree.

The pilot phase of the bilateral project in 1996–7 was devoted to developing robust organizational structures and establishing appropriate evaluation procedures. These provided the basis for a full-scale empirical

evaluation of tandem language learning via e-mail and MOOs in 1997–8. The findings will shortly be published in a detailed report (Little et al., forthcoming). The report focuses on the following principal areas:

- overview of the theory and principles of tandem learning;
- evaluation of organizational structures and pedagogical framework;
- evaluation of the affective dimension of tandem learning;
- evaluation of learning processes and outcomes reflected in e-mail exchange data.

The Dublin–Bochum project revealed two serious drawbacks to using standard e-mail facilities for language learning. First, data collection is by no means straightforward and can easily become highly problematic; and second, if tandem language learning by e-mail is to be maximally beneficial, it needs its own Web environment which in due course can be enhanced by the development of appropriate tools. In order to overcome these drawbacks, Christine Appel and Tony Mullen (formerly of CLCS, now of the University of Groningen) are currently developing a Web-based programme which makes use of Common Gateway Interface scripting to allow messages to be exchanged through the medium of the Internet browser itself. This will enable the tandem coordinator to determine what portions of any exchange are recorded for analysis and what support tools are made available to students. We expect this development to have a major impact on tandem language learning by e-mail over the next few years.

3.3 Language learning technologies

(Breffni O'Rourke, Klaus Schwienhorst and John Moran)

All research and development in language learning technologies this year focussed to a greater or lesser extent on the role of network technologies in pedagogy. Since the beginning of the three-year funding period, the central goal has been to find ways in which digital technology can promote flexible interaction among learners as well as between learners and materials. Research efforts continue to see networking as a powerful means to this end.

Work began this year on the development of a learning environment using WBT Systems' proprietary TopClass system. TopClass is entirely HTML based, so that instructors, administrators and learners all access it using a standard Web browser. The pedagogical model that is to some degree inherent in TopClass does not match our own conceptions; nevertheless, the environment furnishes a powerful set of tools for the management of materials and users and the facilitation of asynchronous communication among users. The range of tasks inherently supported by the system is limited, but since it is HTML-based, it supports the use of the various interactive Web technologies, including Java and Shockwave.

We believe that TopClass is likely to be most powerful if deployed in conjunction with the synchronous communication environment of the MOO (object-oriented multiple-user domain). Efforts are ongoing to achieve both technical and pedagogical integration of the two systems, and they will be used together in the German modules provided for students of Information and Communications Technology.

Work on a Java-based lexical organizer has been brought to an advanced stage, and the most recent version aroused considerable interest when it was demonstrated in June at the Educational Multimedia/Educational Telecommunications conference in Freiburg. One idea mooted in subsequent discussion was that it should be used as a component, perhaps an alternative user interface, to a bilingual dictionary. An invitation has been extended to pursue this idea in collaboration with a Polish university involved in a Polish-English multimedia dictionary project.

Research in and development of MOOs has been consolidated and expanded. The particular demands of a virtual language learning environment have required the setting up of a dedicated MOO on a CLCS server. This environment will be piloted in a project with Fachhochschule Rhein-Sieg, Bonn, Germany, in the coming year. The MOO database is based on the Educore, which also forms the basis of Diversity University, the MOO that was used in the previous two years. This ensures continuity and expandability, while at the same time making use of the

support available from developers in Diversity University.

Managing our own MOO, we have to consider the additional area of administration, but we also have the opportunity to configure the system for our particular purposes. This entails the possibility of a larger degree of student participation in the creation of new learning environments. Our major focus during the setup of the MOO will be the integration and extension of WWW functionality, the management of larger groups or classes, and the implementation of shared resources for group-based work. This should facilitate the use of the MOO by other teachers and perhaps by other departments.

A third strand of research is concerned with finding ways of using Natural Language Processing tools and techniques to model and enhance the process of language learning. An intelligent tutoring system is being developed which will operate over the World Wide Web, providing tools to generate language exercises using authentic English language texts. The system will function as a resource for educators and as a method of gathering empirical data which it is hoped will provide useful insights into the process of second language learning. A working prototype has been built and was presented at an international conference in University College Dublin in March 1998.

3.4 Publications

Little, D., 1997: "Designing interactive video programs for group work in a self-access language learning environment". In M. Wendt and W. Zydatiß (eds), *Fremdsprachliches Handeln im Spannungsfeld von Prozeß und Inhalt* (Beiträge zur Fremdsprachenforschung 4), pp.163–72. Bochum: Brockmeyer.

Little, D., 1998: *Technologies, Media and Foreign Language Learning*. Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. & E. Ushioda, 1998: "Designing, implementing and evaluating a project in tandem language learning via e-mail", *ReCALL* 10.1, pp.95–101.

Little, D. & E. Ushioda, 1998: *Institution-Wide Language Programmes: a Research-and-Development Approach to their Design, Implementation and Evaluation*. London: CILT, in association with the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College Dublin.

Little, D., E. Ushioda, M. C. Appel, K. Schwienhorst, B. O'Rourke & J. Moran, forthcoming: "Evaluating tandem language learning by e-mail. Report on a bilateral project". CLCS Occasional Paper No. 55. Dublin: Trinity College, Centre for Language and Communication Studies.

O'Rourke, B., 1998: "A network-based tool for organizing second-language vocabulary". In T. Ottman and I. Tomek (eds), *Proceedings of ED-MEDIA & ED-TELECOM 98*. Charlottesville, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

Ridley, J. & E. Ushioda, 1997: "Using qualitative research methods to explore L2 learners' motivation and self-perceptions", *Teanga* 17, pp.29–42.

Schwienhorst, K., 1998a: "The 'third place' – virtual reality applications for second language learning". *ReCALL*, 10(1), 118-126.

Schwienhorst, K., 1998b: "Co-constructing learning environments and learner identities – language learning in virtual reality". In T. Ottman and I. Tomek (eds), *Proceedings of ED-MEDIA & ED-TELECOM 98*. Charlottesville, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

Simpson, B. L., 1997: "An examination of data elicitation methods in research into L2 pragmatics, and their influence on the determination of pragmatic competence in non-native speakers". In A. Sorace, C. Heycock and R. Shillcock (eds.), *Proceedings of the GALA '97 Conference on Language Acquisition*, pp.428–33. Edinburgh: HCRC.

Simpson, B. L., 1997: "A study of the pragmatic perception and strategic behaviour of adult second language learners", *Language Awareness* 6.4, pp.233–37.

Simpson, B. L., 1997: "Towards a methodology for developing cross-cultural pragmatic awareness in the context of language learning". In D. Killick & M. Parry (eds), *Cross-Cultural Capability. The Why, the Ways and the Means : New Theories and Methodologies in Language Education*, pp.254–62. Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.

3.5 Conference papers, talks and workshops

Appel, M. C., 1998: "The development of language awareness and learner autonomy in tandem language learning via e-mail". XVI Congreso Nacional de AESLA, Universidad de La Rioja, 22–25 April.

Little, D., 1998: "Learner autonomy and tandem language learning". Keynote lecture given at the UK National Tandem Day, University of Sheffield, 19 June.

Little, D. & E. Ushioda, 1998: "LSP, LAP and institution-wide language programmes: a theory-driven case study". Keynote paper presented at the UCD-IRAAL conference "Languages for Specific Purposes and Academic Purposes – Integrating Theory and Practice", Dublin, 6–8 March.

Moran, J., 1998: "A WWW-based discovery learning program for learners of EFL". Paper presented at the UCD-IRAAL conference "Languages for Specific Purposes and Academic Purposes – Integrating Theory and Practice", Dublin, 6–8 March.

O'Rourke, B., 1998: "A network based tool for organizing second-language vocabulary". Paper presented at ED-MEDIA/ED-TELECOM 98, Freiburg, 20-25 June.

O'Rourke, B., & Schwienhorst, K., 1998: "Learner databases and virtual worlds – Creating collaborative learning environments on the Internet". Paper presented at the UCD-IRAAL conference "Languages for Specific Purposes and Academic Purposes – Integrating Theory and Practice", Dublin, 6–8 March.

Schwienhorst, K., 1997: "Talking on the MOO: Learner autonomy and language learning in tandem". Invited paper presented at CALLMOO: Workshop on Enhancing Language Learning Through Internet Technologies, Bergen, 15 December.

Schwienhorst, K., "Co-constructing learning environments and learner identities – language learning in virtual reality". Paper presented at ED-MEDIA & ED-TELECOM, Freiburg, 20-25 June 1998.

Simpson, B. L., 1998: "Theoretical and practical issues in the development of LSP courses for refugees and immigrant learners". Paper presented at the UCD-IRAAL conference "Languages for Specific Purposes and Academic Purposes – Integrating Theory and Practice", Dublin, 6–8 March.

Ushioda, E., 1998: "Tandem language learning via e-mail: from motivation to autonomy". Paper presented at 5th CercleS International Conference, Bergamo, 17–19 September.

Appendix 1 – Modified band descriptors and rating-sheet (Non-beginner oral presentations)

Expected maximum global level of attainment
Can speak at length with confidence and reasonable fluency on familiar or general topics, adapting appropriately to formal/informal contexts. Lacks facility in handling abstract or unfamiliar topics but can cope reasonably well. Difficulty with complex sentence and discourse structures.

Individual Student Assessment

CATEGORY	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Phonology:	almost unintelligible	strong L1 accent	fair L2 accent	good L2 accent and intonation	very good L2 accent and intonation
Fluency:	very slow and hesitant - frequent stops and starts	stilted and somewhat hesitant but manages to keep going	flows reasonably well despite occasional hesitations	fluent, good expression	very fluent and expressive, normal speech tempo
Grammatical control:	very little control - grammatical errors impede the message	errors frequent, difficulty with complex structures, but message intelligible	good control of basic structures, some errors in more complex structures and discourse patterns	only occasional errors, mostly in control of complex structures and discourse patterns	very few noticeable errors, competent control of complex structures and discourse patterns
Vocabulary:	deficient vocabulary knowledge seriously impedes communication	limited vocabulary knowledge; no attempt to use specialist terms appropriate to the task/topic	good general vocabulary knowledge but limited knowledge of specialist terms appropriate to the task/topic	demonstrates clear effort to use specialist terms and vocabulary appropriate to the task/topic	very good mastery of specialist terms and vocabulary appropriate to the task/topic

Group Task Assessment

How effectively the task is executed in terms of –
content/substance; organization; rhetorical skills; presentation skills; continuity and flow

To be marked out of 10, the presentation must fulfil TWO conditions:

(a) **Students should not read from scripts** (prompts, visuals, props, OHP transparencies, etc. may of course be used);
(b) **The presentation must be interactive** (i.e., there should be regular interaction and communication between the students in the group, and not just a simple sequencing of individual talks)

1	2 weak	3	4 satisfactory	5	**6** good	7	**8** very good	9	**10** outstanding

If the presentation fails to fulfil ONE of these conditions, it can only be marked out of 8

If the presentation fails to fulfil BOTH of these conditions, it can only be marked out of 6

Sample rating-sheet

Group	Topic	Assessor

Individual student assessment

Category																										
Band levels	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Phonology																														
Final revision																														
Fluency																														
Final revision																														
Grammatical control																														
Final revision																														
Vocabulary																														
Final revision																														

Group Task Assessment

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1	2 weak	3	4 satisfactory	5	**6** good	7	**8** very good	9	**10** outstanding

If the presentation fails to fulfil ONE of these conditions, it can only be marked out of 8

If the presentation fails to fulfil BOTH of these conditions, it can only be marked out of 6

Appendix 2: Summary of income and expenditure

	LANGUAGE MODULES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT			LANGUAGE MODULES RECURRENT COSTS		
Income	Carried forward from 1996–7	£32,534		Carried forward from 1996–7	£48,775	
	Benefaction	£30,000		HEA special allocation	£56,000	
	Grants, sponsorship and consultancy earnings	£10,772				
	Total		**£73,306**	**Total**		**£104,775**
Expenditure	Salaries and studentships	£39,513		Salaries and hourly teaching	£42,690	
	Academic fees	£9,392		Academic fees	£1,842	
	Conferences and travel	£5,000		External examiners' fees and expenses	£1,136	
	Equipment and software	£1,181		Accommodation and entertainment (external examiners)	£731	
	Stationery and printing	£2,137		Stationery and printing	£1,574	
	Miscellaneous	£1,052		Miscellaneous	£97	
	Total		**£58,275**	**Total**		**£48,070**
	Balance carried forward to 1998-9		**£15,031**			**£56,705**